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TIVICAY is a prescription HIV medicine that is used with other antiretroviral medicines to treat Human Immunodeficiency Virus-1 (HIV-1) in adults and children 12 years of age and older and weighing at least 88 pounds. It is not known if TIVICAY is safe and effective in children younger than 12 years or who weigh less than 88 pounds.

In SINGLE, a clinical study with 833 patients who had never taken HIV treatment before:

- **More patients got to undetectable (less than 50 copies of HIV-1 RNA in a milliliter of blood) with TIVICAY 50 mg once daily and abacavir sulfate + lamivudine than with Atripla.[®]** In the study, 88% of patients who took TIVICAY with abacavir sulfate + lamivudine were undetectable vs 81% of patients taking Atripla at 48 weeks.
Patients who took TIVICAY with abacavir sulfate + lamivudine had an average CD4 cell count (CD4 cells are T-cells that help fight infections) increase of 267 cells/mm³ (the number of CD4 cells per cubic millimeter of blood) vs 208 cells/mm³ in patients who took Atripla at 48 weeks.
- **Fewer patients stopped taking TIVICAY due to side effects.** In the study, 2% of patients taking TIVICAY with abacavir sulfate + lamivudine stopped taking medication due to side effects vs 10% of patients taking Atripla. The most common mild side effect for patients on TIVICAY was trouble sleeping—affecting 7% of patients on TIVICAY and 3% of patients on Atripla. The most common medium to severe side effects for patients on TIVICAY were trouble sleeping—affecting 3% of patients on TIVICAY and 2% of patients on Atripla; and headache—affecting 2% of patients on TIVICAY and 2% of patients on Atripla.

In SPRING-2, a clinical study with 822* patients who had never taken HIV treatment before:

- **It was shown that TIVICAY[†] worked as well as raltegravir[†] in getting patients to undetectable (less than 50 copies of HIV-1 RNA in a milliliter of blood).** 88% of patients who took TIVICAY[†] were undetectable vs 86% of patients taking raltegravir[†] at 48 weeks.
About half of the patients who took TIVICAY[†] or raltegravir[†] had a CD4 cell count increase of at least 230 cells/mm³ (the number of CD4 cells per cubic millimeter of blood) at 48 weeks. The other half had increases of 230 cells/mm³ or less.
 - **Few patients stopped taking medication due to side effects.** 2% of patients taking TIVICAY[†] stopped taking medication due to side effects vs 2% of patients taking raltegravir[†]. The most common mild side effect for patients on TIVICAY was trouble sleeping—affecting 1% of patients on TIVICAY and less than 1% of patients on raltegravir. The most common medium to severe side effect for patients on TIVICAY was nausea—affecting 1% of patients on TIVICAY and 1% of patients on raltegravir.
- *808 patients were included in the study results.
[†]Taken with either abacavir sulfate/lamivudine or emtricitabine/tenofovir.

**Your results could vary.
Ask your healthcare provider if TIVICAY is right for you.**

What is TIVICAY?

TIVICAY is a prescription HIV medicine that is used with other antiretroviral medicines to treat Human Immunodeficiency Virus-1 (HIV-1) in adults and children 12 years of age and older and weighing at least 88 pounds. HIV-1 is the virus that causes Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). It is not known if TIVICAY is safe and effective in children younger than 12 years or who weigh less than 88 pounds.

TIVICAY does not cure HIV-1 infection or AIDS. You must stay on continuous HIV-1 therapy to control the HIV-1 infection and decrease HIV-related illnesses.

IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION

Who should not take TIVICAY?

- **Do not take TIVICAY if you take dofetilide because of a life-threatening interaction.**

What are the most serious side effects of TIVICAY?

- **Allergic reactions. Stop taking TIVICAY and get medical help right away if you have:**
 - **A rash with any of these symptoms:** fever; general ill feeling; extreme tiredness; muscle or joint aches; blisters or sores in your mouth; blisters or peeling of your skin; redness or swelling in your eyes; swelling of your mouth, face, lips or tongue; problems breathing.
 - **Any of the following signs or symptoms of liver problems:** yellowing of your skin or whites of your eyes; dark or tea-colored urine; pale-colored stools (bowel movements); nausea or vomiting; loss of appetite; pain, aching, or tenderness on your right side below the ribs.

- **Changes in liver tests.** People with a history of hepatitis B or C virus may have an increased risk of developing new or worsening changes in certain liver tests during treatment with TIVICAY. Your healthcare provider may do tests to check your liver function before and during treatment with TIVICAY.
- **Changes in body fat** can happen in people who take HIV-1 medicines, including increased amount of fat in the upper back and neck (“buffalo hump”), breast, and around the middle of your body. Loss of fat from the legs, arms, and face may also happen. The exact cause and long-term health effects of these problems are not known.
- **Changes in your immune system** can happen when you start taking HIV-1 medicines. Your immune system may get stronger and begin to fight infections that have been hidden in your body for a long time. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you start having new symptoms after starting your HIV-1 medicine.

What are the other possible side effects of TIVICAY?

- The most common side effects of TIVICAY include trouble sleeping and headache.

Tell your healthcare provider about any side effect that bothers you or that does not go away.

These are not all the possible side effects of TIVICAY.

Important Safety Information continued on next page.

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(dolutegravir)
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true to you

What should I tell my healthcare provider before I take TIVICAY?

Before taking TIVICAY, tell your healthcare provider if you:

- have ever had an allergic reaction to TIVICAY
- have or had liver problems, including hepatitis B or C
- have any other medical condition
- are pregnant or plan to become pregnant. It is not known if TIVICAY will harm your unborn baby
- are breastfeeding or plan to breastfeed. **Do not breastfeed** if you take TIVICAY. You should not breastfeed if you have HIV-1 because of the risk of passing HIV-1 to your baby. It is not known if TIVICAY passes into your breast milk. Talk to your healthcare provider about the best way to feed your baby.

Tell your healthcare provider about all prescription and non-prescription medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements you take.

TIVICAY and other medicines may affect each other, causing side effects. TIVICAY may affect the way other medicines work, and other medicines may affect how TIVICAY works.

Especially tell your healthcare provider if you take:

- other HIV-1 medicines including: efavirenz (SUSTIVA®), etravirine (INTELENCE®), fosamprenavir (LEXIVA®)/ritonavir (NORVIR®), nevirapine (VIRAMUNE®), or tipranavir (APTIVUS®)/ritonavir (NORVIR®).

- antacids or laxatives that contain aluminum, magnesium, sucralfate (CARAFATE®), or buffered medicines. TIVICAY should be taken at least 2 hours before or 6 hours after you take these medicines.
- iron or calcium supplements. Supplements including multivitamins containing calcium or iron may be taken at the same time with TIVICAY if taken with food. Otherwise, TIVICAY should be taken at least 2 hours before or 6 hours after you take these medicines.
- anti-seizure medicines: oxcarbazepine (TRILEPTAL®), phenytoin (DILANTIN®, DILANTIN®-125, PHENYTEK®), phenobarbital (LUMINAL®), carbamazepine (CARBATROL®, EQUETRO®, TEGRETOL®, TEGRETOL®-XR, TERIL®, EPITOL®)
- St. John's wort (*Hypericum perforatum*)
- a medicine that contains metformin
- rifampin (RIFATER®, RIFAMATE®, RIMACTANE®, RIFADIN®)

You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA. Visit www.fda.gov/medwatch, or call 1-800-FDA-1088.

Please see Patient Information for TIVICAY on the next pages and discuss it with your healthcare provider.

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Healthcare

PATIENT INFORMATION

TIVICAY® (TIV-eh-kay) (dolutegravir) Tablets

Read this Patient Information before you start taking TIVICAY and each time you get a refill. There may be new information. This information does not take the place of talking with your healthcare provider about your medical condition or treatment.

What is TIVICAY?

TIVICAY is a prescription HIV medicine that is used with other antiretroviral medicines to treat Human Immunodeficiency Virus-1 (HIV-1) infections in adults and children 12 years of age and older and weighing at least 88 pounds. HIV-1 is the virus that causes Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). It is not known if TIVICAY is safe and effective in children under 12 years of age or who weigh less than 88 pounds.

When used with other HIV-1 medicines to treat HIV-1 infection, TIVICAY may help:

- Reduce the amount of HIV-1 in your blood. This is called “viral load.”
- Increase the number of white blood cells called CD4+ (T) cells in your blood, which help fight off other infections.
- Reduce the amount of HIV-1 and increase the CD4+ (T) cells in your blood which may help improve your immune system. This may reduce your risk of death or getting infections that can happen when your immune system is weak (opportunistic infections).

TIVICAY does not cure HIV-1 infection or AIDS. You must stay on continuous HIV-1 therapy to control HIV-1 infection and decrease HIV-related illnesses.

Avoid doing things that can spread HIV-1 infection to others.

- Do not share or re-use needles or other injection equipment.
- Do not share personal items that can have blood or body fluids on them, like toothbrushes and razor blades.
- Do not have any kind of sex without protection. Always practice safe sex by using a latex or polyurethane condom to lower the chance of sexual contact with any body fluids such as semen, vaginal secretions, or blood.

Ask your healthcare provider if you have any questions about how to prevent passing HIV to other people.

Who should not take TIVICAY?

Do not take TIVICAY if you take dofetilide. Taking TIVICAY and dofetilide can cause side effects that may be life-threatening.

What should I tell my healthcare provider before taking TIVICAY?

Before you take TIVICAY, tell your healthcare provider if you:

- have ever had an allergic reaction to TIVICAY
- have or had liver problems, including hepatitis B or C infection
- have any other medical condition
- are pregnant or plan to become pregnant. It is not known if TIVICAY will harm your unborn baby. Tell your healthcare provider if you become pregnant while taking TIVICAY.

Pregnancy Registry. There is a pregnancy registry for women who take antiviral medicines during pregnancy. The purpose of the registry is to collect information about the health of you and your baby. Talk to your healthcare provider about how you can take part in this registry.

- are breastfeeding or plan to breastfeed. **Do not breastfeed if you take TIVICAY.**

- You should not breastfeed if you have HIV-1 because of the risk of passing HIV-1 to your baby.
- It is not known if TIVICAY passes into your breast milk.
- Talk to your healthcare provider about the best way to feed your baby.

Tell your healthcare provider about the medicines you take, including prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, or herbal supplements. TIVICAY and other medicines may affect each other causing side effects. TIVICAY may affect the way other medicines work, and other medicines may affect how TIVICAY works.

Especially tell your healthcare provider if you take:

- other HIV-1 medicines including: efavirenz (SUSTIVA®), etravirine (INTELENCE®), fosamprenavir (LEXIVA®)/ritonavir (NORVIR®), nevirapine (VIRAMUNE®), or tipranavir (APTIVUS®)/ritonavir (NORVIR).
- antacids or laxatives that contain aluminum, magnesium, sucralfate (CARAFATE®), or buffered medicines. TIVICAY should be taken at least 2 hours before or 6 hours after you take these medicines.
- iron or calcium supplements. Supplements including multivitamins containing calcium or iron may be taken at the same time with TIVICAY if taken with food. Otherwise, TIVICAY should be taken at least 2 hours before or 6 hours after you take these medicines.
- anti-seizure medicines:
 - oxcarbazepine (TRILEPTAL®)
 - phenytoin (DILANTIN®, DILANTIN®-125, PHENYTEK®)
 - phenobarbital (LUMINAL®)
 - carbamazepine (CARBATROL®, EQUETRO®, TEGRETOL®, TEGRETOL®-XR, TERIL®, EPITOL®)
- St. John's wort (*Hypericum perforatum*)
- a medicine that contains metformin
- rifampin (RIFATER®, RIFAMATE®, RIMACTANE®, RIFADIN®)

Ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist if you are not sure if your medicine is one that is listed above.

Know the medicines you take. Keep a list of them to show your healthcare provider and pharmacist when you get a new medicine.

How should I take TIVICAY?

- Take TIVICAY exactly as your healthcare provider tells you.
- Do not change your dose or stop taking TIVICAY without talking with your healthcare provider.
- Stay under the care of a healthcare provider while taking TIVICAY.
- You can take TIVICAY with or without food.
- If you miss a dose of TIVICAY, take it as soon as you remember. If it is within 4 hours of your next dose, skip the missed dose and take the next dose at your regular time. Do not take 2 doses at the same time. If you are not sure about your dosing, call your healthcare provider.
- If you take too much TIVICAY, call your healthcare provider or go to the nearest hospital emergency room right away.
- Do not run out of TIVICAY. The virus in your blood may become resistant to other HIV-1 medicines if TIVICAY is stopped for even a short time. When your supply starts to run low, get more from your healthcare provider or pharmacy.

What are the possible side effects of TIVICAY?

TIVICAY may cause serious side effects, including:

- **Allergic reactions.** Call your healthcare provider right away if you develop a rash with TIVICAY. **Stop taking TIVICAY and get medical help right away if you:**
 - **develop a rash with any of the following signs or symptoms**
 - fever
 - generally ill feeling
 - extreme tiredness
 - muscle or joint aches
 - blisters or sores in mouth
 - blisters or peeling of the skin
 - redness or swelling of the eyes
 - swelling of the mouth, face, lips, or tongue
 - problems breathing
 - **develop any of the following signs or symptoms of liver problems:**
 - yellowing of the skin or whites of the eyes
 - dark or tea-colored urine
 - pale-colored stools or bowel movements
 - nausea or vomiting
 - loss of appetite
 - pain, aching, or tenderness on the right side below the ribs
- **Changes in liver tests.** People with a history of hepatitis B or C virus may have an increased risk of developing new or worsening changes in certain liver tests during treatment with TIVICAY. Your healthcare provider may do

(continued)

PATIENT INFORMATION for TIVICAY® (dolutegravir) Tablets (cont'd)

tests to check your liver function before and during treatment with TIVICAY.

- **Changes in body fat** can happen in people who take HIV-1 medicines. These changes may include increased amount of fat in the upper back and neck ("buffalo hump"), breast, and around the middle of your body (trunk). Loss of fat from the legs, arms, and face may also happen. The exact cause and long-term health effects of these problems are not known.
- **Changes in your immune system (Immune Reconstitution Syndrome)** can happen when you start taking HIV-1 medicines. Your immune system may get stronger and begin to fight infections that have been hidden in your body for a long time. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you start having new symptoms after starting your HIV-1 medicine.

The most common side effects of TIVICAY include:

- trouble sleeping • headache

Tell your healthcare provider about any side effect that bothers you or that does not go away.

These are not all the possible side effects of TIVICAY. For more information, ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist.

Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects. You may report side effects to FDA at 1-800-FDA-1088.

How should I store TIVICAY?

- Store TIVICAY at room temperature between 68°F to 77°F (20°C to 25°C).

Keep TIVICAY and all medicines out of the reach of children.

General information about TIVICAY

Medicines are sometimes prescribed for purposes other than those listed in a Patient Information leaflet. Do not use TIVICAY for a condition for which it was not prescribed. Do not give TIVICAY to other people, even if they have the same symptoms you have. It may harm them.

You can ask your pharmacist or healthcare provider for information about TIVICAY that is written for health professionals.

For more information call 1-877-844-8872 or go to www.TIVICAY.com.

What are the ingredients in TIVICAY?

Active ingredient: dolutegravir sodium

Inactive ingredients: d-mannitol, microcrystalline cellulose, povidone K29/32, sodium starch glycolate, and sodium stearyl fumarate. The tablet film-coating contains the inactive ingredients iron oxide yellow, macrogol/PEG, polyvinyl alcohol-part hydrolyzed, talc, and titanium dioxide.

This Patient Information has been approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

Manufactured for:

by:



ViiV Healthcare
Research Triangle Park, NC 27709
May 2014
TVC:2PIL



GlaxoSmithKline

GlaxoSmithKline
Research Triangle Park, NC 27709

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Our Government Relations team led the legislative effort to bring marriage equality to Minnesota.



Left to right: Ryan Schmisek, Debra Yerigan, Dan Goldberg and Vija Brookshire

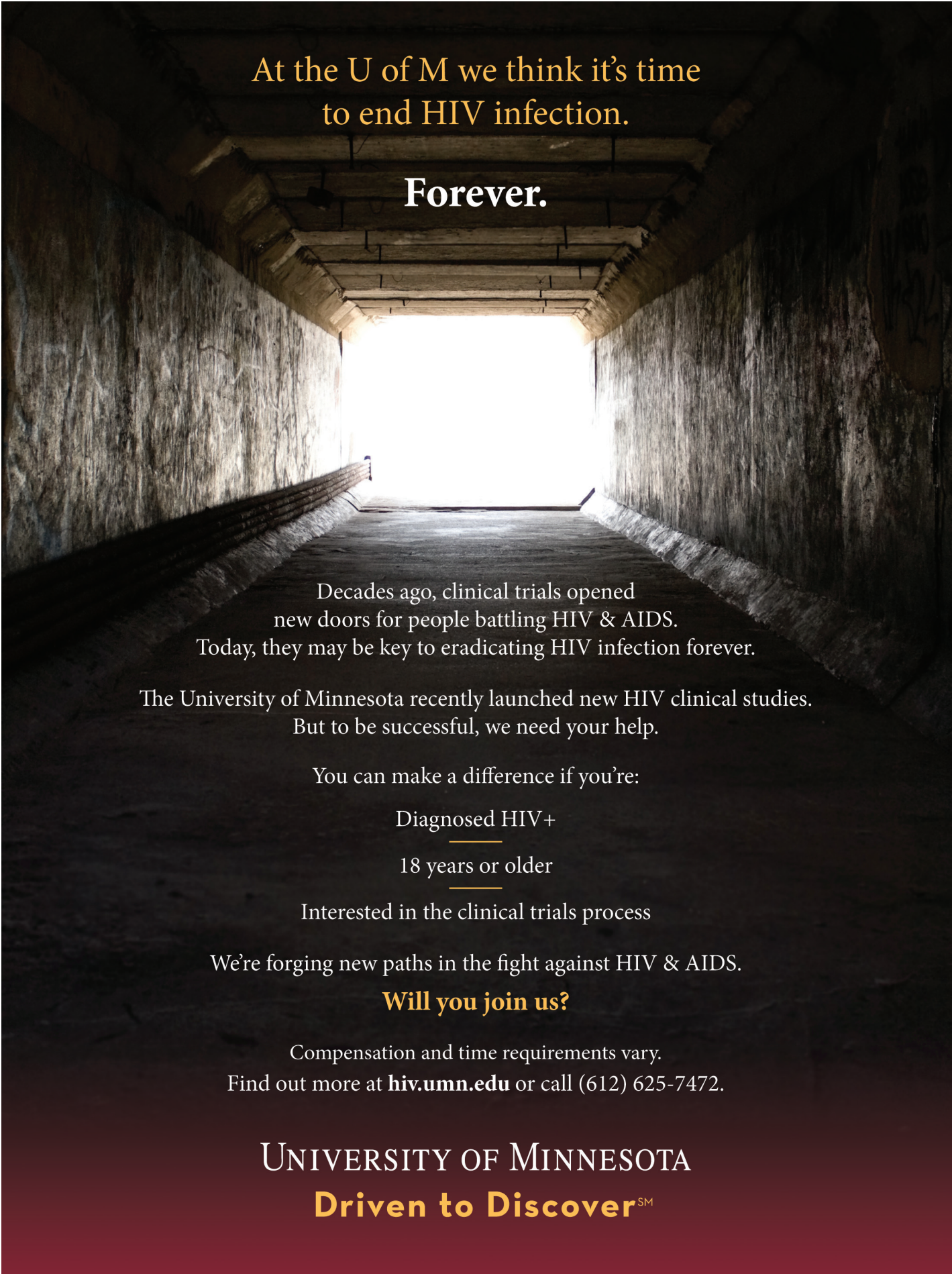
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CHEF MIKE RAKUN'S

DESTINATION: MARIN

WHAT DOES THE NAME MARIN MEAN?

Both Marin and its sister restaurant, Mill Valley Kitchen, are inspired by a northern California lifestyle, so we decided to go even further and extend that to the name. It is named for Marin County, California, which is just north of San Francisco.

WHY NORTHERN CALIFORNIA?

It's really the whole land and lifestyle. The emphasis is on food that is fresh, healthy and natural. It's like a breath of fresh air. The inspiration for the food is the use of fresh natural ingredients and preparing food that highlights, not covers, their natural flavors. That's my approach at Marin.

DO YOU TRAVEL TO CALIFORNIA OFTEN?

As often as I can — my wife and I spent time this spring in the wine country north of San Francisco. I look for ideas there in everything I see, smell and eat. Since that trip, I've brought back a number of ideas for Marin's menu, including the addition of mushroom ramen.

When you come into Marin, I'd suggest sampling your way through some of our wine finds from the Napa and Sonoma regions. There's nothing better on a warm fall day to grab those last patio moments with a great glass of wine!



MARIN

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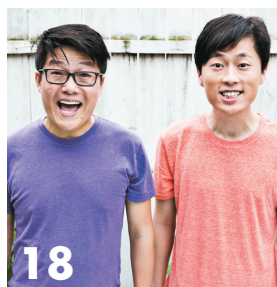
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Page 28: Photo by Kyle Lieberman. Page 18: Photo by © Heidi Bohnenkamp, 2014. Page 22: Photo by Mike Hnida. Page 54: Photo by Hubert Bonnet.

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ON THE COVER

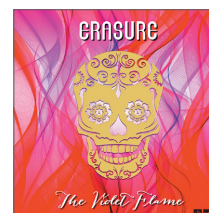
Staging your home to sell: hire a professional who knows what attracts people to purchase their next home. Read more from Sarah Gordon on page 44. Photo by Hubert Bonnet

CORRECTION FROM ISSUE 503:

4000 Miles will be playing at Park Square Theatre December 5-21, 2014, instead of Jacob Marley's Christmas Carol.



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Prizes



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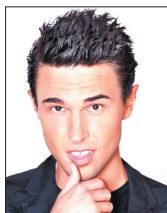
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When Time Stops

September 11 always brings with it social networking posts and conversations of people remembering where we were and what we were doing when the United States was attacked by terrorists that day in 2001. I appreciate those memories; it's how we recall ourselves and our lives through our own lenses, which gives us our own significance at such a brutal time in our history.

There are few times in my life when I so vividly remember a day in my history. I don't think this means that I find very few things to be historical; I think it's that there hasn't been a great number of broad, sweeping events or actions that freeze time in the same way. My memory retains snippets of events and images: logos and signs, feelings and interactions, temperature and weather. I can remember everything I experienced that election night at RiverCentre in St. Paul when the marriage amendment was voted down, but the actual winning of marriage equality in Minnesota is a bit more convoluted due to it being spread out over multiple days. But, when July 31 turned into August 1 and same-sex marriage became legally recognized, I know that I was at Patrick's Cabaret covering the mass wedding ceremony that happened as the clock struck midnight; I know where I parked, who I saw, that I grabbed coffee at a fast food drive-thru on Lake Street on my way to Minneapolis City Hall where I found more people getting hitched until the wee hours of the morning.

When DOMA was struck down by the Supreme Court of the United States and Prop 8 went the way of equality in June last year, I was at

my desk, following SCOTUSBlog and every other social media outlet I could. Social networking had been covered in a sea of HRC logos in red and pink; I can recall the people who pleasantly surprised me by changing out their profile picture for that clear display of supporting same-sex marriage. Those victories certainly made that morning significant, but the fact that it wasn't broad and sweeping in terms of defining a clear path for the nation means that it didn't take on that same air of historical relevance it could (should) have.

On September 29, the Supreme Court of the United States will have its first conference to consider which cases it will hear in its 2014-2015 term. There are 7 different petitions seeking *certiorari* (hearing oral arguments that will likely result in judgment) in marriage cases from 5 different states that have been distributed for the conference. If the marriage cases aren't mentioned at that conference, there are subsequent other conferences this fall at which we might see progress.

My hope is that this is the year that time stops; when we remember what we were doing the morning that the Supreme Court ruled that banning same-sex marriage is unconstitutional in the United States. I want it to be one of those momentous occasions that causes us to remember what we had for breakfast, what was playing on the radio when we got the phone call, who we hugged, how we cried. How we felt significant.

With you and with hope,

Andy ■

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Putting A Face On It

"It" can be most any image you can think of: that Ah-ha! photo that makes a person (or creature, or event) real to you, never again a statistic or ignorable cipher.

It can be a victim of war and displacement, it can bring home the plight of abused animals. The joyous, the wondrous, the mysterious can also have a face. NASA's *Viking 1* mission to Mars was launched thirty-nine years ago this month. Designed to transmit for 90 days, it went on sending for over six years. For a Ray Bradbury geek like myself it was a thrill to see that man had, via *Viking 1* and 2, actually touched the red planet's surface.

Photographer Brandon Stanton, who on Facebook and in his blog and book *Humans of New York (HONY)* has for several years now shared portraits of New Yorkers, is currently on a UN-sponsored tour of dangerous areas and war zones around the world: Etril, Iraq, Zaatari refugee camp in Jordan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ukraine, South Sudan, and Haiti.

Some criticize that his portraits are simplistic, not showing the full

complexity of an area's problems. But given the absence of our own information on the peoples he's visiting, he's wise to start with the basics: a face. One reader replied he was shocked to see that these foreign lands have shopping malls: "I thought there was nothing but villages and dust." A young man from Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo, one subject of a Stanton portrait, shared, "I'm studying to be a civil engineer. Congo needs everything: bridges, roads, buildings, wells. The Congo is like a workshop." You can feel the connection.

Others know the power of the "Face," and are not pleased to have it shown to the public. Getty Images photographer Scott Olson was one of several journalists arrested in Ferguson, Missouri covering the shooting death of eighteen-year-old Michael Brown by officer Darren Wilson. An image of Olson being led off in handcuffs (for "not getting out of the way fast enough") was taken by a colleague, who stood his ground to put a face on the moment.

We can reach out to others through images and be moved through them. They can open our eyes, our horizons. Welcome them and learn. ■

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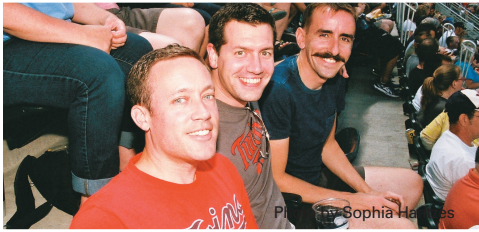


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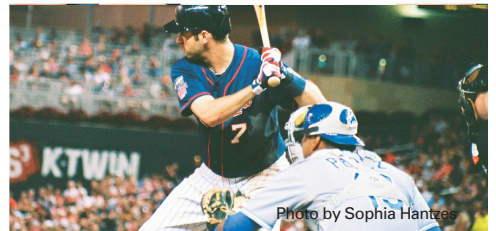


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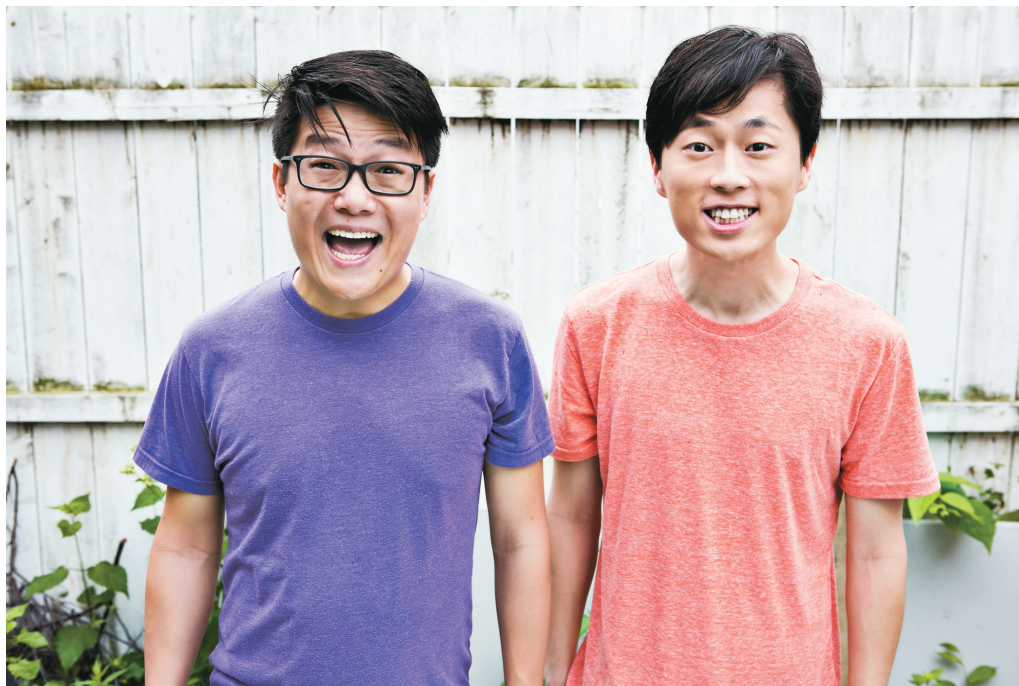
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Middle Brother. Photo by © Heidi Bohnenkamp, 2014

THE ELECTRIC BALLROOM

Through Sept. 28

New Century Theatre, City Center, 612 Hennepin Av., Mpls.

612-455-9501

www.franktheatre.org

Enda Walsh is one of Ireland's foremost playwrights and he is known for a quirky style that has a distinctive way of drilling into confrontational subject matter. Frank Theatre Artistic Director Wendy Knox is staging his *The Electric Ballroom*. She relates that it's "about storytelling and how the narrative is controlled by who is doing the telling. It's about an event that happened years ago. Two sisters in their 60s recount the events of the evening, but from different perspectives. The story is reenacted regularly as a cautionary tale for their younger sister, in her 40s. The sisters haven't left the house in years, and the younger sister is the only one who has the chance to escape. Enter a hapless fishmonger of the village who perhaps represents the younger sister's only ticket out, and he gets drawn into the reenactment and delivers the surprise ending of the piece."

MIDDLE BROTHER

Through Sept. 28

Southern Theater, 1420 Washington Ave. S., Mpls.

651-789-1012

www.muperformingarts.org

The issues of Korean adoptees have become the subject of various dramatic works generated in the Twin Cities in recent years. Sun Mee Chomet's *How to be a Korean Woman* is an acclaimed example. Now there's a male perspective on the subject with *Middle Brother* which has been workshopped locally with Mu Performing Arts, was read at New York City's Leavitt Lab, and was a finalist for the National New Play Network Showcase. Local writer-performer Eric Sharp tells his story of

brothers being reunited and the need to put that into perspective. Robert Rosen directs.



Gabriel. Photo courtesy of Walking Shadow Theatre Company

GABRIEL


Sept. 26 - Oct. 11

Minneapolis Theatre Garage, 711 W. Franklin Av., Mpls.

800-838-3006

www.walkingshadowcompany.org

Moira Buffini's drama is set in the World War II era but its concern with trust based on national allegiances is uncannily resonant of the present day. Amy Rummenie, director of the play for Walking Shadow, observes, "There is a pair of lines of erotic tension that run through *Gabriel*. One is romantic in nature, but fraught with complications: is the handsome young Gabriel (Ross Destiche) a safe but endangered British gent, or a lost German agent with darker secrets? Even Gabriel doesn't remember, and neither is romantically safe for Lily (Miriam Schwartz). The second relationship is darker and even more complicated: the mother of the house, Jeanne (played by Katherine Kupiecki), negotiates a



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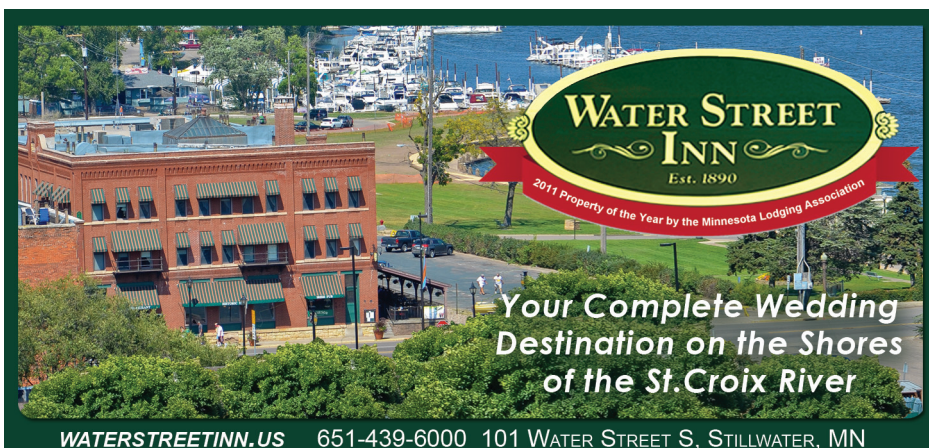
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The Mystery of Irma Vep.
Photo by Michal Daniel

THE MYSTERY OF IRMA VEP

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www.jungletheater.com

The Jungle is reviving one of their favorite staples. Charles Ludlam's two-person play requires that two men do all the roles, which means cross-dressing and lots of costume changes. The farce draws from Victorian melodrama, vintage horror flicks, madcap screwball comedy, and the camp style that Ludlam gloried in. Actor Bradley Greenwald says, "We spend almost as much time backstage choreographing the changes as we do tech-ing the scenes themselves. Try getting into your clothes in 10 to 12 seconds. Then try going from a man to a woman in full Victorian garb in the same amount of time. It's hard and you need help. That's why we have a crew of five back there—three more than the cast! It's all minutely choreographed so that it happens the same way every time, no fumbles or wiggles or hesitation. Rip off one costume, then step into an intricately puddled dress on the floor—right foot, left foot, right hand, left hand—arms up for wig, take teeth out while inching toward the entrance door as the velcro is attached. Voila! The crew works like the dickens back there and that's why they get their own well-earned bow at curtain call." ■

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Lavender's Fall New Restaurant Roundup



Brasserie Zentral. Photo by Mike Hnida

Shocking to no one, I'm not a math major. The check arrives and I stick to a straight percentage on that tip because I suck on a very basic level. No, I'm not proud. However, you don't need a slide rule to figure out that the amount of restaurants hitting the Twin Cities dining scene is a lot. Count them on both hands: a lot.

The most ambitious project of the year has to be the **Brasserie Zentral** project inside the Soo Line building in Minneapolis. **Chef Russell and Desta Klein** of St. Paul's **Meritage** have three distinct places and almost all are ready and open. The first to open was Brasserie Zentral: a fine dining, gluten lover's paradise. You haven't tasted a schnitzel until you've supped on theirs. It's a gorgeous setting for a date night. Order one of the dishes made for two, like the succulent roast chicken with the mahogany skin. Serving lunch, midday snacks, and dinner, it's a welcome new spot for taking out of town business clients as well. Do not miss the cocktails mixed by Trish Gavin, either. Elegant and perfectly

balanced, these are what they mean when they say "craft" cocktails.

That's not all. They also recently launched **Café Zentral** in the skyway. The fresh, beautifully prepared food brings desk-side dining to a new level.

Finally, there's a third new offering inside this building: **Foreign Legion** is ready to launch any day now and the space is absolutely stunning. The wine bar is serving by-the-bottle and -glass from a list selected by **Nicolas Giraud**, who also wrote the wine book of those served at Meritage. With a selection of small plates this place is a renaissance of the wine bar the likes of which we haven't seen since the '90s. If you work downtown, or have an event, this is the place to plan a happy hour destination.

It's not too late to hit the gorgeous patio atop the new **Libertine** and get yourself a bone marrow *luge*. The restaurant isn't the first collaboration between James Beard Award-winning chef **Tim McKee** and

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(Clockwise from top) Libertine, Verdant Tea, Marché.
Photos by Joy Summers

the restaurant group **Parasole** (they also own Manny's Steakhouse, Salut, Mozza Mia, and more.) But, this is the first time that McKee chose the concept and stamped his name on the menu. He's brought in chef **Stephan Hesse** to run the kitchen. Hesse and McKee both opened Masu in Northeast and the Mall of America as well. The interior dining room is swank, but comfortable, with plenty of windows along Lake Street to take in the Uptown sights.

The menu is meat-heavy and listed by animal, although there is a little section of dishes prepared with plants or simply "not animals." Carnivores and whiskey fans will love the bone marrow. Scoop up all the delicious meat jelly and request a shot of whiskey poured straight down the bone into your await-



ing mouth. Or stick to traditional eats like their fantastic French fries and char-kissed steaks. Don't miss the oysters. The cocktail list was written by the one and only Johnny Michaels, who made his name while running the bar at La Belle Vie (and writing the Northstar Bartenders Guild book). The non-alcoholic drinks are given every bit as much attention and layers of flavors as the spiked ones.

If your mood is for something just a wee bit lighter, duck into **Marché**. This is the third or fourth restaurant (depending on how much you count Parlour that shares Borough's kitchen) from **Jester Concepts** that also owns Coup d'Etat. Located in the Lime Apartments on the first floor, they sport a wide-open room with a pretty just-off-Lyndale Avenue patio. The menu is

CONTINUED ON PAGE 26 ➔



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as simple as it is good: sandwiches made with great ingredients, grilled until the exterior boasts a crust that collapses with a deafening crunch. Everything is made from scratch and it's possible that you will catch chef **Nick O'Leary** grilling up something pretty inside. Pastries and coffee drinks are perfect for those who live in the building to grab and go in the morning. Soups have a crushed velvet texture and plucked-straight-from-the-vine flavor. It wouldn't be a restaurant from this crew without some remarkable cocktails. These are entirely batch-made and pre-bottled. What that means for a drinker is consistency, no matter who is working, be it **Jesse Held** (their top bar man) or a barista. The Old Fashioned is here and it is a dark brown beauty you'd be happy to hang your hat on.

Further down Lyndale, just over the border into Richfield, is the new **Lyn 65**. It's run by chef and owner Ben Rients, a one-time sous chef at Restaurant Alma. Everything served here is fresh, locally sourced, and organic without being overly fussy or pretentious. This is firstly a neighborhood spot and its cozy space inside an unassuming exterior is easy and comfortable. On the menu are a few pizzas, a tender braised beef short rib with miso butter, and a crab Benedict that is decadent fun for dinner. Cocktails are once again of the craft in nature and are worth working your way through the menu.

In Seward you might notice that there are a few full bellies wandering out of the **Verdant Tea** space. When first they opened, this tea house specialized in hand-harvested leaves from specific small, family farms in China. They strive to do for tea what next-generation coffee houses have done for beans, which they have, but the ambitious team wasn't done

there. Although they continue to have brews that have tea nerds losing their minds, they also now have a full menu. Like the man once said: But wait! There's more! There is now a full bar—boozy concoctions that are beautiful. They use local, craft distilled spirits like Loonshine from Northfield, Minnesota, or Far North Spirit's Solveig gin from super far North Minnesota. (It's not just a clever name). Is it possible to have it all? Verdant Tea is certainly trying and their focus on every minute detail thus far has it working out that way. Just order the gravlax rice balls and tell me it isn't.

Minneapolis isn't having all the fun. St. Paul's Payne Avenue continues to get new eateries including **Tongue in Cheek**. Despite the cheeky name, they actually serve mostly straight-forward recognizable American fare. The steak tartare served on a salt block is gluten-free fun to scoop up. Their success is in the small plates and they have a remarkable happy hour. Order teasers for just a couple of bucks and you can leave happy and full. Each are prepared to the chefs whims and allows for him to be creative. The pork was a play on crunchy, soft, chewy textures. They've also got some great fries served with a side of gravy—all the best of poutine without the sad soggy nature that can result. ■

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* Photography by Kyle Lieberman

WHAT SHOULD BE FROM THE LIPS OF GRANT WHITTAKER

Grant Whittaker is Depressed. Ugly. Anorexic. Bullied.

Grant Whittaker is Alive. Gorgeous. Ferocious. Intriguing.

He comprises these qualities because he's lived them. These are the seams of his personal history, informants to his perspective, muses to his present.

The adjectives that describe Grant Whittaker culminate into the cliché word "unique," but it isn't enough. "Unique" is too banal and ill-defined. The qualities that make up Grant Whittaker have no descriptor.

For now, simply "Grant" will do. Say the word, the name, at any fashion show and people know exactly what—who—you mean. There is no other word to describe who he is.

Grant's home, for example, is so Grant. Every room is a different world, every turn a surprise, every detail exciting and new. His living room is modern and ethereal; his kitchen is mint-green and retrospective but sharp and delicate; his closet is outrageous and breathtaking and colorful.

We sit in his dining room for our interview. It's Liberace-meets-Versace, a gold-encrusted Fabergé egg peppered with gothic-like accents; it's over-the-top without being cartoonish or parodic.

We chat casually about his longtime partner and our impressions of his home, but conversation quickly turns to his personal life and suddenly we're lost with him on trips to Germany, his birthplace, and to London, New York, Chicago and Los Angeles. He shares with us an impressive career path and ever-developing opinions on body image.

"Everyone has something they hate about themselves," he says. The statement is raw and delivered forcefully—almost harshly—but is unflinching and true. "There are holes in my self-esteem," he says.

It's an immediately unbelievable statement, the latter. After all, Grant is the epitome of self-confidence.

Over the last year alone, he's continued as creative director of the annual Fashion Ball in Minneapolis, an event he created; styled *Minneapolis-St. Paul Magazine's* Fashionopolis; designed for the Ballet of the Dolls; hosted innumerable fashion events, including the premiere of Emma Berg's most recent collection, "I Am Everything"; and has checked off many more accomplishments than this space allows.

But tragedy and volatility punctuate his story, and as wonderfully as his current chapter reads, we understand where his insecurities originate.

He was bullied in middle school for being overweight and effeminate; he lost a sister when he was ten; he was abused by a school teacher at an early age.

So he danced. He danced to fit into what made others beautiful, to lose weight, to embrace his fragility, perhaps as a grab at superficial confidence,

perhaps as an easy distraction. Dancing gave him a body and impressed high school classmates. He was on high and felt beautiful.

With confidence came modeling, anorexia, depression.

"You could be doing some [fashion shows]—we think your face is gorgeous—you have great skin," the fashion industry told him. "But your legs are too thick."

Too thick? What? But he had the legs of a dancer; they were a hard-won response to childhood ridicule; they provided him confidence. His body gave him the wherewithal to pursue something exciting, and suddenly it was a hindrance. What gave him newfound self-esteem became ugly and undesirable.

What did it mean to be beautiful? It certainly didn't mean being overweight or effeminate. Yet androgyny meant beauty in fashion. And he was supposed to be in shape, but the dancer's body proved overweight in modeling. Where was universal beauty?

Eating disorders plagued him for years. He sacrificed ambition over an obsession with food and body image. Depression consumed him.

An epiphany came during his darkest hours, when he recognized what'd been present all along, comprising the strengths of those he admired. He realized that moving forward meant owning his insecurities, not hiding from or fighting them. He embraced them. He championed them. He put them center stage and even loved them.

What ensued was a career that's taken Grant from a creative director for Mercedes Benz, to a senior editor at the former *Twin Cities Luxury Magazine*, to founding Grant Whittaker Style, a fashion and style consultancy with clients ranging from corporations to individuals in fashion distress, whom he encourages to embrace insecurities in order to conquer them. His mark is well known.

"I'm not trying to make you me," he says as our interview wraps. He smiles and there is brief but dense silence.

Grant crosses his legs and licks his glossy lips.

His skin shimmers in the reflection of a golden candelabra through a gold-framed mirror.

We see what he means, what he's learned, how he's lived: that there is no such thing as universal beauty, in fashion, in society, in his life, or in ours. We realize that what describes us isn't called "unique"—the word isn't enough. We aren't as fabulous or artistic or vibrant as Grant, but we shouldn't be. There is no "should." There is no definition for who we are or what we embody. There is only us: our tragedies, successes, histories, and style that make us each our own. We are, should only, and can only, be.

For more on Grant Whittaker, visit GrantWhittakerStyle.com.

For more pictures of Grant's home, visit LavenderMagazine.com/lavfash.



FALL 2014

Iggy Azalea's "Fancy" had our eyes rolling this summer (but our feet tapping). Fashion this fall echoes her sentiment. This "fancy" fall season brings with it expensive-looking fabrics and rich colors, intricate patterns and elaborate finishes, and mix-and-matched patterns and textiles.

Ladies:

Tight knit pieces are on virtually every runway this season in sweaters, dresses, tights and overcoats.

Look for hues of dark greens and purples for regality and warmth. Expect a variety of shades on both ready-to-wear and accessories.

Warm up with fur, faux or real (we prefer faux, for the record), with emphasis on shearlings for outerwear, particularly coats. Tom Ford's fall is a perfect exhibition.

Gents:

Long and lean. Slim trousers are a retrospective on the '60s, as sampled on runways for summer 2014.

Lightweight turtlenecks and roll neck tops are a key piece; pair one under a dinner jacket as your staple evening wear. Think solid colors and patterned blazers.

Pay homage to Iggy's "fancy" with tilted fedoras (re: Tom Ford; his collection was indeed inspired by gangsters).



Photography by Kyle Lieberman
Makeup by Kate Erickson
Location: Minneapolis Club

All women's clothing and jewelry provided by Minq. All men's clothing provided by Heimie's Haberdashery. Models provided by Ignite Models. Models in order from left to right:

On Gabby:

Petit Pois Dress - \$182
Jack Vest - \$79
Helen Wang 14K Swarovski Drop
Necklace - \$94
Helen Wang 14K Garnet and Cornelian
Earrings - \$68

On Matt:

Mantoni Jacket - \$225
Mantoni Shirt - \$55
S.Cohen Tuxedo Pants - Custom
Bruno Piattelli Tie - \$38

On Ann:

Eva Franco Dress - \$340
Jack Fur Vest - \$75
Helen Wang Peacock Pear Earrings - \$62

On Luke:

S. Cohen Jacket - \$495
Tulliano Turtleneck - \$88
Dunhill Pants - \$210
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On Julia:

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Avant Garde Necklace - \$205
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Dotti West Captures Toast of the Town House Title

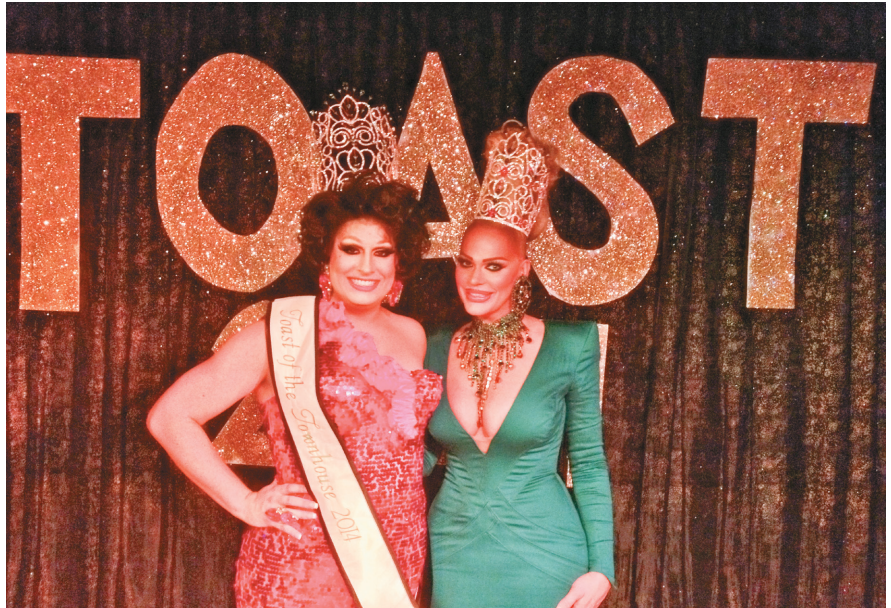
On the evening of August 23, the 2014 Toast of the Town House Pageant took place at the St. Paul bar. The theme was "Back To School." Hosted by Lily White, Pumps & Pearls Drag Revue Show Director; the event drew a large crowd.

Eight contestants competed for the coveted title: Dotti West, Gucci Velour, Raven Knight, Sasha Gisselle Carter, Octavia Bonet, Azalia Cruz, Kama-ree Williams, and Victoria De Ville. The categories were Theme Wear, Talent, and Evening Gown.

In a close contest, Dotti West captured the crown. First Runner-up was Victoria De Ville. Second Runner-up was Octavia Bonet.

Tiffany T. Hunter, stepping-down Toast of the Town House 2013, performed several numbers, as did other past titleholders, including Brandonna Dupri LaReese (2012) and the incomparable Barbara Gordon (2005).

The Pumps & Pearls Drag Revue is the featured entertainment every Wednesday night at the Town House, St. Paul's oldest GLBT bar, which marks its 45th anniversary this fall. ■



Dotti West (left) and Tiffany T. Hunter. Photo Courtesy of Lily White

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Twenty Years Ago: International Mr. Drummer Memories

On Saturday, September 24, 1994, I competed as Great Lakes Mr. Drummer 1994 in the International Mr. Drummer contest in San Francisco. That was 20 years ago this month and, amazingly, the people I met and the experiences I had during that weekend have kept resonating and reappearing throughout the last 20 years.

Much has changed since that contest. For starters, there no longer is an International Mr. Drummer title. It, and its companion title of International Drummerboy, in 2002 became the International Leather Sir/Leatherboy titles. And *Drummer* Magazine, which established the Drummer titles, ceased publication in 1999 but remains legendary.

On the Wednesday before the contest, the fourteen regional Drummer titleholders, and about half as many regional Drummerboy titleholders, met the contest's producer, Audrey Joseph (who, in 2014, appeared onscreen in *Folsom Forever*, a documentary about San Francisco's Folsom Street Fair). We also met our contestant handlers for the weekend, Lenny Broberg and Frank Nowicki (both of whom still are highly visible members of the leather community).

Ms. Joseph started things off by proclaiming, "From now until the end of the contest on Saturday evening, you're mine!" As contestants, our time was almost continuously committed to getting ready for the contest: interviews with the judges, photo shoots, parties and public appearances, and (most of all) rehearsals.

We rehearsed the contest. We rehearsed the fantasies (erotic skits) that each of us would be presenting. And we rehearsed the evening's opening production number, the likes of which I never have seen at another leather contest. This production number was so big that it required the services of a choreographer, Charlie Seltz, who somehow got more than twenty nondancers—wearing combat boots, no less—to do *Chorus Line* style choreography ("five-six-seven-eight-kick-turn-step-step"). We wore Inquisition-style black hoods that were sewn by Jacquie Jewels, who was equally at home in the drag and leather communities.

On Thursday each contestant had a private interview with the judges. The judging panel in 1994 was a rare occurrence in leather contests:



all the judges except one were previous International Mr. Drummer titleholders, and that exception was a former International Mr. Leather.

I remember feeling nervous when I walked into the interview room, but the judges were so approachable and un-intimidating that I quickly relaxed, and we all had a warm and friendly conversation. Rather than testing my knowledge of leather history and protocol, the judges seemed more interested in finding out who I was, what my background was, and how it happened that I made it to San Francisco to compete in the contest.

One of the judges was Brian Dawson, who was International Mr. Drummer 1989. Eight years later, Dawson and I sat next to each other on the judging panel at the 2002 International Mr. Leather contest.

Another judge, Woody Bebout (Internat-



tional Mr. Drummer 1991), told me later in the weekend that based on what he had heard in my interview, he thought I needed to write a book. Eventually I did, and *Life, Leather and the Pursuit of Happiness* was published in 2010.

Working as hard as we did bred considerable camaraderie among the contestants. This experience was my introduction to the leather-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 42 ➔

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contest concept, which I have seen so often since, of contestants supporting each other as brothers instead of being fiercely competitive.

Opening number, 1994 International Mr. Drummer contest. Photo by Ken Binder.

Saturday night came—showtime! The lights dimmed. The show began with the production number. All those hours of rehearsal paid off—we actually did justice to Charlie Seltz’s marvelous choreography. The crowd roared its approval.

One of the evening’s emcees was comedian Shann Carr, who is still doing stand-up today and who has become a filmmaker as well. (I interviewed Carr for this magazine in 2005, when she traveled to Minneapolis for an appearance with our own Miss Richfield 1981.)

In my contestant speech I talked about how labels (“fag—dyke—fairy—breeder”) could be harmful when they were used to pigeonhole people, and how much better it would be if we interacted with people as individuals instead of as labels. Because the contestants were kept backstage, I didn’t get a chance to see or hear anyone else’s speech.

Then it was time for fantasy (erotic skit) presentations. Paul Jaques, Mr. Gulf Coast Drummer, did a native American-inspired fantasy in which he dreamed he became an eagle; the eagle feathers were attached to clothespins that were clamped in a line down each of his arms. Kelly Regis, Mr. Western Canada Drummer, performed a fantasy involving a Canadian Customs officer (and later gave me the uniform he used in the fantasy).

My fantasy started with another actor (dressed in jeans and a leather armband) dragging me (dressed in a business suit) onstage by my necktie. Looking at me angrily, he shouted something about “yuppie scum” and then vowed, “I’ll show you what a real man looks like!” He then tore off all my clothes, including my boxer shorts. (I had wanted to be naked underneath the boxers, but the contest producers would not allow it. Therefore, underneath the boxers I wore the smallest g-string I could find.)

My accomplice then helped me into a leather bodysuit (chosen because it was a quick way of clothing me in leather). He put a Muir cap on my head and a leather armband on my left bicep. (There wasn’t time for boots.) Then he took the mirror and held it up to me so I could see what I looked like, and repeated (less angrily this time), “I’ll show you what a real man looks like.” He put down the mirror, switched his armband from left arm to right arm (i.e., switching from top to bottom), and I led him offstage.

Evidently the judges that year were not in the mood for a minimalist

fantasy with a message—they were looking for spectacle and big props. Gary Weltner, Mr. Mid-Atlantic Drummer, made a point about safe sex in his fantasy by using a silk condom big enough to completely cover him from head to toe. Don Robert, Mr. Southern California Drummer, used a 14-foot high gallows as part of a wild-west fantasy. Those big-prop fantasies helped win first-runner-up and second-runner-up honors, respectively, for the contestants who presented them.

While I was backstage during intermission I suddenly developed a sharp, stabbing pain in my right side. My fellow contestants sat me down in a corner of the backstage area, gave me some water to drink, and told me to try to relax. Eventually the pain subsided, and I was able to finish the competition.

Hanging out with Keith Hunt, the new International Mr. Drummer, at the 1994 Folsom Street Fair. Photo by Ken Binder.

The winner of the International Mr. Drummer 1994 title was Keith Hunt, a sweetheart of a guy with a sunny disposition, a big smile, a big mustache, and reddish fur all over his chest. I was glad for him.

The next day, Sunday, was the Folsom Street Fair, and the Drummer contestants spent a perfect California day hanging around the fair as a group. The contest was over, so we had no more duties and could simply enjoy the festivities.

Late Sunday evening, back at the host hotel, the stabbing pain in my side returned. A doctor was called to the hotel room; he diagnosed a kidney stone. I had been so caught up in the whirlwind of the competition and the show that I had neglected to maintain proper hydration. (Nowadays, when a contestant who will be competing in International Mr. Leather or another contest asks me for advice, “maintaining proper hydration” is at the top of the list.)

When the judges’ results were announced, I learned that I had placed eleventh out of 14 regional contestants. Even though I had been working out at the gym, I was one of the less-buffed bodies on the contest stage, and even though I had been using a tanning bed I also was one of the palest bodies on the stage.

In the speech portion of the contest, however, I came in first. A wise gentleman from Dallas took me aside and told me that doing so well in the speech portion of the contest showed that communicating was one of my strengths, and that this was a talent I could choose to share with the leather community.

Not long after the Drummer contest in San Francisco, I was offered the chance to write a leather column in the new GLBT magazine that was just getting started in the Twin Cities. Over 500 issues later, here I am. ■



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Photo by Hubert Bonnet

ALL THE WORLD'S A STAGE, AND YOUR HOME IS THE STAR

BY SHANE LUECK

All of the steps have been completed: the real estate agent listed the property, the house has been cleaned, the lawn has been mowed, and numerous families have come through to tour the nest. Why, then, isn't the home selling? What is missing?

Enter Sarah Gordon, a professional organizer and home stager, who says that for most homes, hiring a stager is key. Everyone has their own designs and idealities of what they believe looks good or goes together. However, every once in a while (or more), there is a need for someone who can be a constructive critic when friends and family cannot. That's where a home stager comes into place. She says, "It's not only in my experience, but also my theory can be proven just by doing a search on real estate photos gone bad—just Google it."

Trying to do staging without the help of a professional can be difficult, but that does not mean that all situations and homes are the same and in need of major help or staging. Hiring a stager does not necessarily mean excessive costs or doing a slight remodel that consists of taking on a second mortgage. In fact, with Gordon's stag-

ing services, she tries to use what exists in the home if possible and add warm touches here and there. Some rooms may only need having another eye look at the space to give it a little "finesse" and to arrange it so it's most spacious and inviting.

Step one in any staging project is, naturally, "Declutter, declutter, declutter." Gordon says, "That is first and foremost and typically all homes are in need of this regardless of if you're looking to sell or not." Decluttering a space is the easiest and most simplistic way to stage and organize the home. A space can look drastically different just by taking out personal belongings, furniture, and knick-knacks. Then comes the next stages: redesigning, moving furniture, updating paint and lighting, and adding general aesthetics. Gordon recommends reading *Staged to Sell* by Jean Nayer; even though it was published in 2009, Gordon stands by many of the tips and ideas as still holding true as a great starting point for anyone looking to cut costs and DIY.

The tips presented in the book, as well as the help of a professional stager can help homeowners notice the little things that buyers

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will look at. Like the saying goes, “you can’t see the forest for the trees.” Paying attention to the small things are very important, and sometimes it takes an outside eye. Gordon says, “Surprisingly enough, just because you’re okay with a little smudge here or there, dirty dishes in the sink, or dog hair on the floor, does not mean the prospective buyer is.” Getting the house in sparkling condition and keeping it clean are huge factors that can make or break the deal. The key is to move on and to make your house as wonderful and welcoming as possible so that it sells.

One acronym that Gordon swears by is called the STACKS method by Marla Dee (Sort, Toss, Assign, Contain, Keep it Up, Simplify). “I practice this and I preach it to all my clients when starting any organizing or decorating project,” she says. “This holds true for preparing a home for sale and getting it staged. Once this is determined, you must then follow with See It, Map It, Do It. We have a tendency to want to jump into things without following the necessary steps from point A to B, but rather skip to Z. Without seeing what our goal is and writing down the steps to achieve, we are not able to do it. Therefore, if you practice those three tips, the end result will be success.”

Gordon’s advice is to keep the song “Feel’s Like the First Time” by Foreigner in the back of the mind to get the mindset to welcome those prospective buyers into making this the most incredible first-time experience. Also, another piece of advice from Gordon to help “See It, Map It, and Do It” are check-off lists. These are great at helping get ready to sell with little tips and ideas to make sure nothing is forgotten. Smead.com has great checklists along with many cleaning company websites...or if the Jaguar of lists seems most appealing, check out Martha Stewart. She has a tremendous amount of lists for cleaning and keeping up or superseding the “Joneses.” Gordon jokes that by following her tried-and-true methods, buyers will squeak their way through the house and right into a purchase and you too will be saying “this is a good thing” just like Martha.

As a rule of thumb, Gordon always believes the rooms used most should be the most appealing to buyers, and are a good place to start when staging a home. These rooms are typically the kitchen, living room, and bedrooms which are rated highest priority for the buyers. However, that doesn’t mean that the other rooms should be second best (such as offices, laundry, entryways, and closets). “Staging is an art form and just like with any piece of art, the way it is presented can make all the difference in the world whether or not it attracts a buyer,” Gordon says. “I say, give it your all, right from the start, because the longer the home sits on the market, just like with relationships, you start to question: ‘What’s wrong with it?’ Because the internet is the place where most of our first impressions are met, staging the home and making the photographs look amazing are just as equally important.”

An often overlooked aspect of staging a home is the lighting. One of Gordon’s favorite quotes, and one which she believes people should hold true to their heart in all possible ways, was by Saul Bass, a graphic designer and Academy Award Winning Filmmaker who said, “I want to make things beautiful, even if no one cares.” Gordon says, “I wholeheartedly agree and think we need more of this in design and our lives and I feel this very statement should be applied with lighting.” According to Gordon, lighting can make or break the space. It can give you that “wow” or “get out now” factor. For example, think about a space that felt dingy and dirty, then ask yourself what type of lighting did it have? If you can’t recall and it made you want to leave right away, chances are it didn’t provide adequate lighting or not the right kind of lighting.

“Homebuyers may not be able to pinpoint exactly what makes them not like the space, but can tell you the feeling it gave them; when a home doesn’t have proper lighting that can in turn make the prospective buyer feel claustrophobic and uninterested,” Gordon says. “Another hype within the last few years has been the LED light bulbs that last supposedly ten years. In my experience, that has not been the case and these lights

create a ‘deer in the headlight’ effect in our living spaces. We want to invite people in, not make them feel like they’re our next target. Therefore, I always recommend updating lighting by adding soft lighting as opposed to LED or fluorescent, adding recessed or can lights to the space with a dimmer, and always try to add table or floor lamps to add softness and comfort at eye level.”

The reality is, buyers are looking for sudden impact...that’s what they want. Buying a home is an emotional purchase, with the highest demographic being first-time homebuyers. This will be one of the largest purchases they will make in their lifetime and their expectations and sights are set high. When buyers are searching for their home, they are looking for that “ohh-la-la” feeling: that moment when they just know that house is the right one for them. “All the senses must come alive for that potential buyer and that’s exactly what staging done right can do,” Gordon says. “From a psychological standpoint, I always try to engage all the senses that we use daily to help make the decision to purchase that particular home.”

According to the American Psychological Association, our brain’s emotional response is most engaged by sense of smell. That’s why so many TV shows and articles address the importance of the smell of the home. The way a home smells can trigger both positive and negative responses and can turn off a buyer just based on if it smells like smoke, cat pee, or burnt popcorn. In Gordon’s experience, if anything can be a deal breaker, smells are the biggest one, next to a cracking foundation.

The best tip Gordon can offer is to contact the professionals: a stager, realtor, appraiser, furniture consultant, feng shui expert, or (if all else fails) TIVO HGTV’s Lisa LaPorter for hours and hours of *Designed to Sell*. She says, “In all seriousness, hiring an individual experienced in their field can help you take care of the necessary things while transitioning to the next purchase.”

If organizing services seem appealing to help prepare for the move, a great website is NAPO.net (National Association of Professional Organizers). They not only give great tips, but can also help locate a professional organizer (such as Sarah Gordon) but also a relocation assistant, someone who specializes in hoarding or specific rooms such as garages. Gordon also recommends classes that teach the best methods, trends, and designs for staging to sell your home. A number of cities like Maple Grove and Spring Lake Park offer community education classes for the “DIYs” looking to improve their space, but also cut their costs in hiring a stager. Another great resource is the Internet and the invention of Pinterest. For any homeowner who is a visual learner and great emulator, this is a fantastic site as it gives endless photos and ideas.

The main standard that Gordon suggests following is a quote by Gabriel “Coco” Chanel: “Keep your head, heels, and standards high.” She says, “There is truth to this, but in all seriousness, when it comes to homes, check it out in the day and evening, talk to the neighbors, and drive by the house on your free time to get a feel for your environment.” Doing your due diligence is key because this is not just another pair of heels that can be discarded after the trend fades. This is a major purchase and major life decision, so it must be the right one.

“My beloved and cherished Aunt who often quoted ‘it’s a bargain if you never used it’ and to many they can relate, this does not make a house worth purchasing because of a low price,” Gordon says. “Purchasing something of this magnitude should be thought through and carefully planned. Again, hiring a professional to give you the pros and cons of your purchase is essential. Secondly, hiring a professional photographer or stager knowledgeable in shooting the home’s best angles is also crucial for your online presence. Remember, before you ever get the opportunity for a prospective buyer to walk in the door, the first impression is already set online. Therefore, make your online photos epic so that you get that buyer in the door.” ■



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SHINING A LIGHT ON HOME DESIGN

BY SHANE LUECK



Photos courtesy of Highmark Builders

It's common knowledge that functional spaces need enough light for the given activity. A chair needs a lamp to read by and a desk needs a desk lamp for office-type tasks. It's even come out that certain colors of lighting in the bedroom can impact sleep patterns.

The team behind Light'n Up has helped countless homeowners properly light their spaces. And, really, why not leave it up to the professionals, trusting their experience? Lighting designer Jeannie Thompson says that lighting needs "are different for each room in your home because you use the spaces differently." Homeowners should layer the lighting in each room to suit personal needs and tastes.

According to David Johnson, an interior designer, scale is one of the major factors to consider when creating a lighting plan. Just imagine how out of place a tiny chandelier looks hung high above a grand dining room table. There are guidelines to follow, such as the common knowledge of hanging a chandelier so that there are 35 inches between the top of the table and the bottom of the chandelier. But Johnson also offers design knowledge that homeowners might be unaware of or simply don't think about when shopping for lighting. He says, "You should also select a piece that is 12 inches narrower than the width of your table so that your dinner guests won't hit their heads when they stand up from the dinner table."

But it's not just about the dimensions of the fixture. The lines, weight, finish, and negative space all factor in when selecting the right piece for a space. Johnson's best tip is to consult with a friendly neighborhood lighting designer who can help make the most of a lighting design. He says, "Whether you're creating a completely recessed lighting scheme or showcasing a dramatic chandelier, there are truly endless lighting tips to learn and discover." This is a free service at Light'n Up which can help save homeowners from costly and time-consuming mistakes.

Lighting designers can also help buyers sort through the various trends making their way into the lighting world. Just as in fashion, lighting fixtures experience their share of trends. Thompson noticed, "Just like gold jewelry is back, gold tone finishes have a strong showing in lighting. Don't worry, this is not your grandmother's polished brass chandelier. The 'new' gold is a subtle blend of gold and silver, which is very versatile and can complement most interiors."

While many lighting designs may appear to be timeless, they are usually part of a larger trend that waxes and wanes in popularity. Trends in lighting are a reflection of what is happening in the fashion industry with

just as many options available to reflect each person's personal style. Johnson describes, "As vintage clothing designs have gained in popularity, so have vintage fixtures. Choosing pieces that are a reflection of your own style will enable you to enjoy your lights long after the life cycle of any single lighting trend. For example, barrel shades and orbs are current hot trends, but they need not become quickly outdated in your home if they reflect your personal style and overall home design."

Today, there is a greater variation in style with a lot more creativity than there was five or ten years ago. Tammy Jacobson, another lighting designer with Light'n Up, observes that lighting is a lot cleaner than it was five to ten years ago. "We don't see as much of the heavy Old World that we once did."

According to Johnson, the biggest lighting trend today is variety, variety, and more variety, with more to choose from today than ever before. "This is due in large part to the acceleration of new lighting technologies such as LED as well as the broadening spectrum of popular home designs today," he says. "While there are endless options available, it can be just as difficult to find the perfect pendants for your kitchen island as it is to find the perfect pair of jeans."

While Thompson says that the most common misconception homeowners have is that "a single source of light can provide adequate lighting for all the ways we use each space in our homes," Jacobson sees more people believing that it needs to be expensive to be creative.

Johnson says, "People often mistakenly think that they have to forgo their personal style and strictly follow the design of their home. But it's really not that simple. Of course you need to consider the overall style of your space, but your lighting scheme can also become a unique and high-impact juxtaposition against the backdrop of your home."

Sculptural lighting, or fixtures that have high design built into them, are also up for debate among buyers in terms of their usefulness. Thompson says that consumers purchase their lighting largely for its aesthetic qualities, so if there is a space with architectural aspects to showcase, it is definitely worth it.

However, Johnson says there may be more to it; this is an area where personal taste guides the selection process as buyers balance the need for illumination with the sculptural elements of the fixture. "Oftentimes more sculptural lights do lack in light output," he says. "However, if you utilize recessed can lights to illuminate your space, this will allow you





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HOT TOPIC

SOLAR AND FIRE AS ALTERNATIVE HEAT



Photos courtesy of Bridgewater Construction LLC

BY SHANE LUECK

The tremendous growth in the industry surrounding solar power in the U.S. is helping to pave the way to a cleaner, more sustainable energy future. Over the past few years, the cost of a solar energy system has dropped significantly, which means more American families and businesses are gaining access to affordable, clean energy.

According to Craig Tarr, President of Hudson-based Energy Concepts, Inc., Minnesota has an excellent solar resource, citing it as being comparable to Houston, TX or Sarasota, FL. He says, "Our cooler tem-

peratures allow solar systems to be more efficient throughout the year."

Solar energy for homeowners can be harnessed in the form of solar water heating or solar electricity. "Solar water heating is typically used for pre-heating water used for showers, laundry, etc. (the domestic water heating loads)," Tarr says. "This is a very simple and effective use of solar energy and typically 75% of your water heating needs can be met."

The feature that most everyone is aware of is electricity as a result of solar power. Solar electricity generation or "photovoltaics" is the most



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popular technology in today's market. Tarr notes that these systems have no moving parts and silently generate electricity whenever the sun is shining. "The electricity is fed into your home's main electrical panel whereby it reduces the amount of electricity purchased from the utility. If your solar system is generating more electricity than your home is consuming at any given time the excess is sent back to the utility and your meter literally spins backwards giving you a full credit."

But is the investment worth it? Turns out, there are rebates available for those who are considering making the leap into solar technology. These rebates can be as much as 25 percent of the system cost. Tarr also cites that the federal government has a 30 percent direct tax credit to further reduce the costs. For business owners, five year depreciation can be taken for an additional 40 percent. "There are no other home improvements that receive the percentage of cost share as solar and when completed give back energy," Tarr says.

He even believes that various types of homes can reap the benefits of solar energy. "An ideal solar site is one with a south facing roof exposure that is free of shading from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. throughout the year," Tarr says. "Solar electric systems can also be ground or pole mounted if your property has better exposure than your roof."

Less often, the systems are expanded to include capacity for space heating, a feature that should appeal a great deal to Minnesota residents. However, Tarr doesn't see solar power used for space heating as a realistic expectation of Minnesotans. According to him, these systems are slightly more complicated and are not quite as effective since the heat generated in the summer cannot be utilized unless there is a pool.

If the great technology of solar power can't heat a home, what can? Craig Weber, architect and owner of Bridgewater Construction LLC, knows his way around a fireplace. The heat source of bygone eras is making a comeback. Turns out fire can be more complex than our cave ancestors led on; Weber notes gas, electric, wood as the three staples (although there are even more options than just these three).

With so many different types of fireplaces on the market, homeowners have their pick of the litter when it comes to style and function. Gas,

for example, is an "instant on," meaning all you have to do is flick a switch (and some even come with remote controls!). Fans within the unit then work to blow the hot air around, but it is difficult to use as a heat source. Although gas fireplaces come in various sizes meant to heat different sized rooms, they won't be effective in heating outside of that one room.

In terms of appearance, gas fireplaces offer wide selections. "Gas fireplaces had a ceramic wood insert that looked like a wood burning fireplace," Weber says, "but a lot of people are going to a different type so it's like a rock or a glass insert in there that is a little bit more distinctive."

Electric fireplaces operate very much like gas, although are typically more expensive to operate. Despite the added expense, electric offers the greatest flexibility. They can be placed anywhere in the home; they don't require an outside wall or a ceiling to go through for a chimney. However, Weber notes that the appearance of electric fires isn't very authentic.

If traditional appearance, sounds, and smells, are not what homeowners are after, the best bet is an authentic wood burning fireplace. "They are just beautiful to watch," Weber says. "But they are dirty; you have to clean them." Weber suggests having a professional cleaner service a wood burning fireplace before every winter because the chimney can accumulate byproducts which can be flammable (whereas gas and electric just need a check-up every couple years to make sure it is burning properly).

He even notes that they are not as efficient compared to gas, even with today's newer technology for wood stoves. To get the most out of alternative heat, Weber suggests something like a wood pellet furnace, which works with hot water heat to be effective throughout the home.

Common belief among the public is that fireplaces add value to a home, and while this is true to a certain extent, the value is up to the individual who is buying it. "It's a personal value component, not necessarily market value," Weber says. "People with allergies don't want a wood burning fireplace, it can make it worse. If people would like fireplaces, the value is up to individual preference. Most people would say that it does add value to your home, but it is very personal." ■

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KITCHENS FOR WHO YOU ARE

BY SHANE LUECK

The two women who share this home in Edina went to Valcucine looking for modern, minimalist, and clean cabinetry. Photos by Hubert Bonnet

Cabinets can devour the bulk of a budget during a kitchen remodel because they are a major investment (and one that's not likely to be made again anytime soon). This type of decision isn't one to take lightly, but the team at Valcucine helps buyers sort through the available options and make choices with confidence.

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DOM staff works to be a one-stop resource for modern living.

While sometimes mistaken for custom cabinetry, Valcucine is actually a modular furniture system. Modular furniture (or cabinets) is pre-made or ready made furniture which can be used according to the need and room spacing (think sectional sofas). “The advantage of Valcucine’s modular system is that the material and hardware has been mercilessly tested and approved before being added to the catalog,” says Emily Little, a manager at DOM Minneapolis and Valcucine designer. “When things are machined, there’s additional assurance that what you’ve ordered is precisely what will arrive so clients can be confident if construction begins prior to the cabinetry’s arrival.”

According to Little, the cost of custom cabinets versus pre-made cabinets is a great question without a great answer because there are so many variables that determine the price. “Some custom options are like wearing a sweater Aunt Delores made you: lots of love but not so hot,” she says. “And other custom options are truly incredible crafts people with amazing capabilities, so clients really need to inspect and do their homework when choosing custom.” This is similarly true with modular cabinetry. Some cabinets are mass produced with more concern about volume than precision. Quality modular cabinets really come down to refinement, innovation, and materials. She adds, “Just as you wouldn’t mistake a Fiat for a Ferrari, there is no mistaking Valcucine for anything else.”

Valcucine designs are able to stretch as far as a customer’s imagination. Little says, “We have hundreds of cabinet options and some seriously amazing storage innovations, but every now and then the right answer is something we don’t offer so we’ll explore a custom piece here and there as long as we don’t feel like there are any safety concerns.”

Customers need not worry, Valcucine products are made for the long haul. According to Little, in Italy and other parts of Europe, families will take their cabinetry with them when they move or add on as the family grows. Here in the U.S. we’ve been blessed to work with clients over and over again as they move residences, though rest assured, if they wanted to bring their cabinets to the next home, they could be loaded up and reconfigured.”

Valcucine even has a special future program guarantee that protects clients for 20 years by guaranteeing the availability of elements required to modify and complete a new layout. Little adds, “This is because Valcucine, contrarily to what is more and more common nowadays, plans the future of its products by extending their durability. The current trend

toward consumerism exploits objects and then very quickly discards them. From Valcucine’s point of view this is wrong because it is detrimental to the planet and doesn’t keep in mind the ecological principles of responsibility toward the future generations.”

All varieties of customers find their happy ending with Valcucine. Whether the project is pretty much planned out already or the customer is in the beginning stages, Little says she and her team are open to the challenge. “We are very adaptable in our approach and open to any cast of contributors the clients bring with them: interior designers, architects, contractors, cousins,” she says. “We’ve spent days, months, or even years on projects depending on the scope and homeowners’ desired pace. Most often it’s a very collaborative process. Clients tell us about their lives and their vision for their kitchen and we provide product knowledge, experience, and design right along side them.”

But wait. Doesn’t Italian cabinets mean a homeowner will have a longer wait period for a project to be done? According to Little, yes and no. The average kitchen installation usually only takes a week to ten days, but there is additional planning that goes into crossing the ocean. Everything is from Italy and there is nothing in stock. Each kitchen is made just for the customer so the lead time is three to four months. This sounds like a long time, but Little says it’s a rare occasion when clients are actually ready when the cabinets arrive.

Valcucine’s drawing boards are currently full of colors and textures that are on trend and progressive: soft grays and whites, natural looking woods, and mellow blues and plums. Little says many clients are asking for fewer wall cabinets or none at all, while seeing a resurgence in pantries and cabinets that hide small appliances.

But Little says to place all of that to the side when planning a kitchen. “There are no wrong answers but we encourage people to work with us to design a space that they love rather than trying to predict what some future user will like or worrying about trends,” she says. “We can serve clients best when we know what type of cooking or baking or entertaining will be done in the space. Whether or not you’re really going to cook a 20lb turkey every year or if you have never used an oven before.”

Ultimately, the kitchen is the home’s epicenter where people entertain, are nourished, gather, and play. Little says, “It’s very important to get the aesthetics right and to dig deep into whether we’re designing a kitchen for who the clients wish they were or who they truly are.” ■

FALL HOME & GARDEN

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 48

to select fixtures more on their sculptural merit than their sheer light output. On the other hand, you can certainly utilize light to highlight sculptural elements of your design and also architectural elements of your space."

While Light'n Up's lighting designers can help buyers sort out their design needs, they can also help buyers through the process of deciding which type of lighting to purchase for their home. Lighting can greatly change the mood of a room. Each type of lighting has its pros and cons.

According to Johnson, some main points to consider are what the buyer needs or wants from the light. "Do you need overall ambient light or task lighting? Do you want to feature a painting on your wall with a spotlight or add additional dramatic effect to an architectural element with recessed lighting?"

Even beyond the fixtures available for selection, buyers have a wide array of light bulbs to choose from. Bulbs come in many shapes, sizes, and color temperatures that affect the look of the lighting and the feel of a space. For example, candelabra bulb base fixtures can often be given a more contemporary look with a globe bulb compared to a traditional torpedo bulb.

Buyers should direct their attention to efficiency versus efficacy, in terms of light bulbs. Efficiency refers to the overall cost to use the light source, whereas efficacy basically means the lumens per watt of a lamp in comparison to the power consumed to produce it.

Similarly, bulbs will come with a CRI (color rendering index) measurement, which is a measurement of how the light source affects the colors in a room, which is exactly why it is important. As a quantitative measurement, CRI looks at the ability of a light source to accurately reveal the colors of objects in comparison to natural light. Naturally, Jacobson says, it is important for people and objects to look their true color. Thompson suggest that, for excellent color rendering, look for a lamp with a rating of 90 or more. Anything with a rating less than 80 is considered poor.

For anyone who has walked into a lighting showroom and been overwhelmed by the number of choices, both with bulbs and fixture design, the use of a lighting designer's expertise is a welcome sigh of relief. But even for those who have a tighter grasp of things, a consultation with a professional is never a bad thing and may result in opening up doors the buyer would have never considered walking through before. ■



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Transgender Search Authority

I absolutely hate airports and flying.

More specifically, it's really the TSA—what I call the “Transgender Search Authority”—which I detest.

Trust me, many trans folk will immediately know what I'm talking about.

Mind you, it's nothing personal; I'm sure there are many good, even nice, Transportation Security Administration employees.

However, for transgender people like me who don't pass 100 percent, the TSA is really a problem. Sometimes it's even in the personal threat category.

Item: In July 2009, two months after I came out as Ellen Krug (but before I had my legal name change—meaning that my driver's license still listed my male name), I was flagged for something in my carry-on bag. As a belly-endowed blue-shirted person unzipped my bag for the world to view as it desired, I suddenly remembered that I needed that cute black sweater I had packed.

When I reached for the sweater, the TSA man shoved my hand away and barked, “Step back from the bag, sir!”

His prejudice was palpable.

At that very moment, I was wearing makeup, a skirt and feminine top, and my hair was close to shoulder length.

That man made me feel like crap.

Item: Little more than a year later, I underwent reassignment surgery in Scottsdale. Post-surgery, my doctor provided a very classy terry cloth pouch that contained various sized clear plastic “dilators;” one must maintain vaginal “depth” via a dilator several times a week.

(If this is too much information dear gentle readers, I suggest stopping now and turning the page; you can always catch my column next month.)

On the way back to Minneapolis after reassignment surgery, there was no way that I was going to check my luggage for fear of Delta forever losing it along with my very critical dilators.

Once again, TSA flagged my carry-on bag at airport x-ray.

As I stood at the end of the conveyor line, a TSA man unzipped the suitcase. After rummaging, he grabbed the terry cloth pouch.

Holy shit, I thought.

Instinctively, I blurted, “Ah, you don't want to open that.”

The TSA person gave a confused look.

“The pouch contains medical dilators,” I tried to explain.

That didn't help the dude at all; he absolutely had no clue what I was saying.

I then went for blunt.

“Dildos,” I said. “The pouch contains dildos.”

Upon hearing the “d-word,” the TSA man promptly zipped-up my suitcase and set me free.

Once more, I felt violated and like a second-class (or maybe even third-, fourth- or fifth-class) citizen.

Item: In October 2010, I visited a niece in Utah, of all places. Because my reassignment surgery was so recent, I took along the terry cloth pouch and a dilator I had aptly nicknamed, “Mr. Macho.” At the Salt Lake City airport on the way home to Minneapolis—you guessed it—the TSA again grabbed my bag.

This time a female TSA employee took me to an enclosed area adjacent to the security line.

Despite hearing that their machine had x-rayed a personal hygiene item and not something sinister, the woman reached into my bag. She then insisted on actually opening the pouch at which point virginal Mormon eyes (presumably) gazed upon Mr. Macho.

“See?” I said. “I wasn't kidding.”

Ms. TSA relented and quickly returned Mr. Macho to his pouch and my bag, which I enthusiastically re-zipped. I wheeled away shaking my head at how senseless some things can be.

Item: Those TSA body scanners are of particular concern. I feel so violated standing with my arms raised and full frontal body exposed to some stranger sitting at a computer screen thinking god knows what. Given the chance, I'll stand in line for an extra twenty minutes in order to go through a metal detector. Most of the time I don't get that choice.

Instead, after stepping out of the scanner, I've had to stand silently as yet another TSA chick pats me down and touches body parts that no one else has touched in ages. (Yes, it's been months since I've had a date.) There's got to be better ways of getting free feels that don't involve such public exposure or bad looking women.

Bottom Line: I'm not the only trans person to endure this kind of stuff. The Internet is replete with stories of far more disrespect, degradation, and horror than what I've gone through. I'm quite grateful that my negative experiences have been so limited.

And too, folks who aren't transgender have similar stories; we trans people haven't cornered the market on violations-of-self.

Still, we're back to the question of being targeted. I believe that anyone who's not white, financially well-off, and male also gets targeted. What does that say about our society?

Do the words Michael Brown and Ferguson, Missouri, mean anything to you?

Hold on. This isn't another soapbox column. Rather, as I'm apt to do, I've simply sought to write about our collective human condition.

With “human” being key.

Basic respect is something all of us crave. As humans, we're acutely aware of the moments when we're disrespected.

As the above reflects, those moments stick with us.

Acutely. ■



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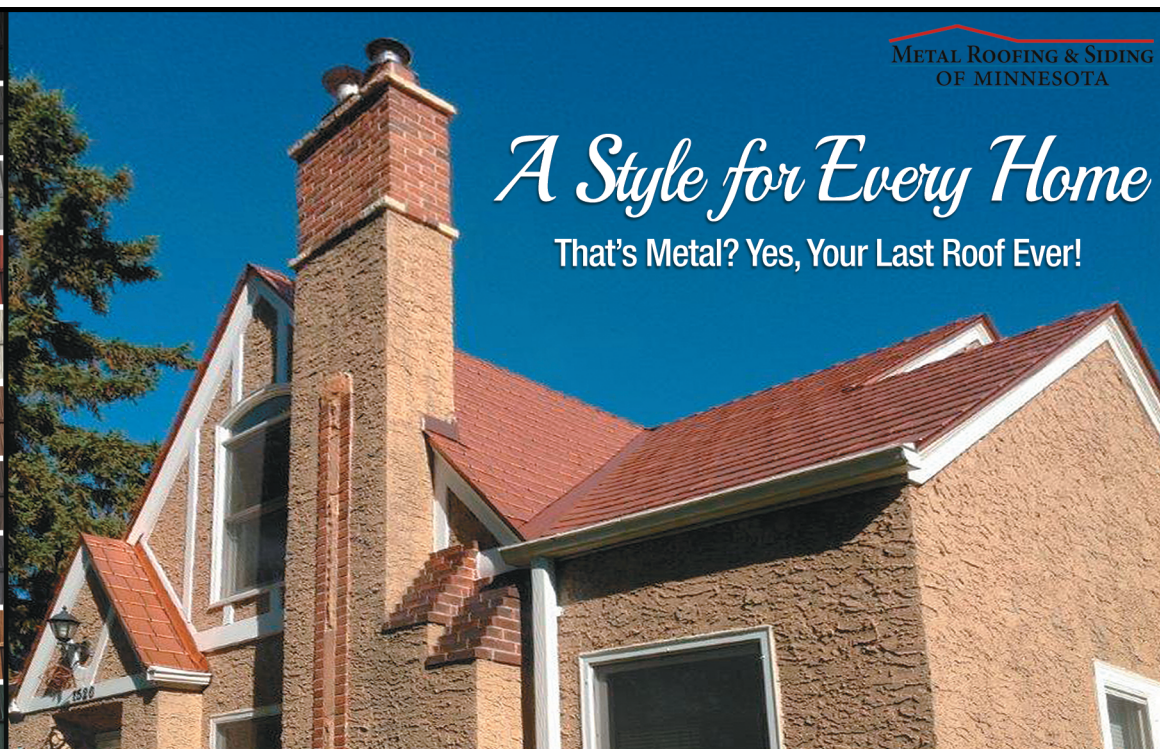
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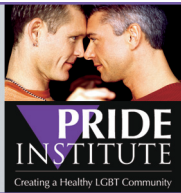
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Bait-and-Switch

"Yes," he says and his lower lip quivers. This is his response to, "What kind of beer do you like?"

We're in my kitchen on either side of my island. "Paul" is sharing a whisky with me before our first date. He likes beer, which I don't have. We're drinking scotch instead.

Paul's vocabulary consists of "yes" and "no." His answers are brief, strained, and totally adorable.

"Sorry," he says. "I mean, I like beer, yes. But I already said that, sorry. I like Fat Tire."

"You okay?"

"Sorry. I'm kind of nervous. I haven't been on a date in a while." He looks bashfully down into his lap.

"*Puh-lease*. I'm the last guy who gives a damn. I'm usually the awkward one. And clumsy. Just for you, I'll spill a glass of wine on my shirt at dinner tonight."

Paul fake laughs. He pushes up the sleeves to his button-down. His arms are hairy and strong and masculine and perfect. His face is statuesque, handsome but hard. He's clean-shaven and has a Koolaid-mustache razor burn. His body is neither fit nor unfit—it's masculine in a way that tells a boyfriend, "I'm more into yours." In other words, dorky and manly and sexy.

"I'm usually more outgoing, I promise," he says.

I move from my side of the kitchen island and sit on a barstool next to him.

"Let's change the subject. How about, hmmm, what's your craziest first-date story?"

He smiles. His breathing slows.

"I, uh," he says, "It's not very crazy, but I once went out on a date with a guy and I tried opening his door for him but he screamed at me. Like, really, *screamed*. I thought I was being sweet and gentlemanly and all, but he yelled at me for it. Not really crazy, I know, but ego-damaging and memorable."

He's clearly used this on other boys, but I still "awwwwww" because it's sweet and because I want him to open *my* car door. Conversation moves into our plans for the fall, our hometowns, and admissions to being bad drivers.

Paul's more than settled by the middle of our second drink and he's growing increasingly confident and flirtatious: winking, nudging, come-hither smiling, when, out of nowhere—

"Why don't you cook dinner for me tonight and let me take advantage of you?"

He doesn't ask this ironically, nor is it a buzz-fed attempt at funny conversation. His eyes are red. He's facing me, massaging my knee, legs spread wide around my barstool.

I want to erase what he's said and replace it with something more tactful and playful. But no, *of course* this is happening. Of course he's devolving into a douchebag before me. At least this is happening now and not after he gets me drunk.

I stand up, pseudo-jokingly struggle to escape his legs around me, and walk back to the other side of my island, pretending like I'm after something, my wallet, keys, whatever. I need to get away from the increasingly apparent third leg in his Levi's.

"What can you cook? Can you cook sweet and sour chicken? I've been craving Chinese.

Should we stay home and eat in tonight?"

Is he drunk off of a glass and a half of scotch? And did he call my house "home?" Really?

"Do I need to take that scotch off your hands, Mr. Paul?"

"Pshhh. Maybe you can come over here and [insert demand for fellatio]." His hands begin exploring his lap.

I don't respond immediately. I feel stupid, gullible, ashamed. How could I not have seen this coming? Paul's tactic for bedding someone isn't new, but it's definitely faster acting.

And welcome, friends, to the World of Open-Your-Door sweet, Suck-My-Blank sour, its current ambassador slouching at my kitchen island, drunk off three fingers of scotch and playing with himself—an otherwise attractive, successful man with so much to offer and not a damn to give.

I stare at him, through him, off into the distance behind him, through the entryway into my apartment, through the wall behind that, and through the one beyond that, and the one beyond that, and on and on, circling the world, looking for a regular douchebag to date. You know, one who'll at least buy me dinner before going sleazy. Not that regular douchebags are better, but at least they'll feed you.

"C'mon, JJ. You know you want it."

"Oh, Paul." I roll my eyes and walk over to him. I drape my arm over his shoulder, in a side-by-side, proud-big-brother way. I lean my head onto his.

"Not even a little bit, Paul. But I sure wish I had your optimism." ■

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